

Learning to write thoughtful, detailed, **specific theme sentences** is a key part of studying a literary work, and will serve as the basis for analytical essay answers.

Themes

What is THEME?

The **theme** of a literary work is the author's **central message** about a topic or subject; it should be expressed in a sentence, and be a general statement about life, human nature, or the human experience.

Theme **cannot be expressed in a single word**: that would be a subject or topic. Examples of topics might be love, hate, ambition, prejudice etc. The *theme* would be the answer to the question: what is the author saying about these topics?



Tips

How to write a theme statement:

1 Identify the TOPIC: This can be in a single word which the literary work deals with: usually something abstract (love, hate, ambition, power, prejudice etc.).

Ask yourself: what are the conflicts faced by the characters? Any inner battles?

2 Decide what IDEA the author is conveying about the topic: This might take some thinking, discussing, and researching. Essentially this is where your own thoughts and analysis come in.

First establish: is the topic (e.g. prejudice) positive or negative? Then answer the question: why?

3 Express the theme in a full SENTENCE: Now you draft your theme sentence by writing out clearly what the essential message is that the author is conveying: this should be a universal point (not tied to the specific characters and events of the text).

To start with, complete this format: "[author] presents the idea that...[topic]... is... [opinion]... because...[analysis].

4 EDIT your theme sentence: You may need to draft, re-draft, and edit your sentence to make it as detailed, clear, and accurate as possible.

Maybe even ask a friend to read it. Read it out loud. Try to get rid of any unnecessary words.

Let's practice that...

Pick a short story you have studied
Title: _____
Author: _____

For your chosen story, identify 3 topics, then write **theme statements** for each of them:

TOPIC: _____ THEME STATEMENT: _____

TOPIC: _____ THEME STATEMENT: _____

TOPIC: _____ THEME STATEMENT: _____
